

Don Thompson
Education Committee Testimony
RE: Education Funding Bills SB 948, SB 949 and SB 886
Wednesday, March 3, 2021

My name is Don Thompson and I am a parent and lifelong resident of Waterbury. Additionally, I am the President of StayWell Health Center in Waterbury. We provide medical, dental, behavioral health and substance abuse services to 24,000 patients living in the Greater Waterbury Area. I am also a member of the board of directors at Brass City Charter School.

I know that throughout the COVID-19 pandemic you and your fellow legislators have been working to keep our community up-to-date on the status of the virus and ensure our most at-risk community members are not forgotten during this time. At StayWell Health Center, we have been responding to COVID-19 by conducting medical and behavioral health visits via telehealth. Additionally, we have provided 7000.00 pop-up covid 19 tests and provided 3000.00 Covid-19 vaccines.

Regarding education in our community, I want to say that all public schools in my community need and deserve more resources and support. However, there are schools in my community demonstrating that our kids can achieve at the highest levels - schools like Brass City Charter School. Brass City Charter School is housed in the former St. Margaret's parish. Two of my children attended the school and we were parishioners. I have lived on the same street as the Brass City Charter School for 35 years and it is heartening to see the old parish property transformed into a campus of learning, serving a population in need. If you have not yet, I invite you to visit the campus in the future, once it is safe to do so.

Throughout my time serving on the Brass City Board of Directors I have seen first hand the challenges of trying to best serve our students with limited and inadequate state funding. This year the Governor has proposed a much needed funding increase for Connecticut charter school students that would bring them to the state's minimum funding level of \$11,525 per student. This increase will allow our school to better serve our students and families and have the ability to continue providing exceptional education in the Waterbury community. It is my hope that this legislative session we will not only see this budget increase passed but that our state's charter school students will be included in the ECS formula and provided with additional weighted funding for their learning needs -- such as being low-income, english language learners or living in a high concentration of poverty.

I ask this committee to please continue your support of equitable education funding for all of our Connecticut children. Thank you for your time.

Don Thompson
Waterbury, CT
StayWell Health Center / Brass City Charter School
dthompson@staywellhealth.org